

EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

Personal and Social Education

Response to the Committee's report from Joanne Barrie (Community Sexual Health Educator) 3 August 2017

Good morning. Thank you for sending the PSE report and response from the Scottish Government.

I have raised my concerns before but think it might be worth highlighting - again- that the report makes no reference whatsoever to children and young people with a learning disability.

This is particularly concerning with regards to Relationships, Sexual Health & Parenthood Education (RSHPE).

Improved RSHPE for young people with a learning disability was a key recommendation from the Barnardo's/ BILD report 'Unprotected, overprotected; meeting the needs of young people with learning disabilities who experience, or are at risk of, sexual exploitation' (2015);

"The Scottish Government and local agencies, including schools, should take an active role in raising awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation among young people with learning disabilities and their parents and carers, and equip and empower them with the skills and knowledge to keep safe and seek help. All primary and secondary schools should ensure provision of high-quality, age-appropriate sex and relationships education, including same-sex relationships, with information adapted and made accessible. Young people with learning disabilities should receive this education at the same time as their peers. This should form part of whole-school approach to child protection that includes information about internet safety, awareness of exploitation and when to give , obtain or refuse consent."

In the Scottish Government's National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland Additional Notes for Practitioners: Protecting Disabled Children From Abuse and Neglect (2014), 'lack of sex education' is listed at a factor of vulnerability.

Children with learning disabilities also feature in the Scottish Government's 'Conduct for RSHPE' (2014)

Whilst I am pleased that the response does include 'special schools' in the forthcoming audit/ review, the total is only 5. It is also important to remember that many young people with a learning disability are in mainstream or in one of the Additional Support Needs units attached to mainstream schools.

I would to see the review of PSE in all 'mainstream' schools including any students with a learning disability, especially those in ASN units.

They often receive very little (if any) RSHPE and have no voice in terms of their own learning.

The fact that they are easily forgotten is reflected in their absence in the report. I hope the review will be more inclusive of one of our most vulnerable groups of children and young people.